



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN WOMEN'S COMMISSION  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

CHERYL BERGMAN  
CEO

March 31, 2021

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor, State of Michigan State Capitol  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer,

Pursuant to Public Act 1 of 1968, we are pleased to submit to you the 2019 Annual Report of the Michigan Women's Commission for the calendar year of January 1 – December 31, 2020.

Our initiatives were operationalized as follows:

**MWC Public Meetings:**

We held four quarterly public meetings of the Michigan Women's Commission:

- 1) January 21, 2020, in Lansing where subcommittees focused on initiatives and goals. The Commission welcomed special guest Jennifer Guarino, President/CEO, Industrial Sewing and Innovation Center (ISAIC).
- 2) May 20, 2020, virtual meeting. The Commission heard from guest speaker Zaneta Adams, Director, Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency, and Kim Trent, Deputy Director of Prosperity, Dept. of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO).
- 3) August 10, 2020, virtual meeting. The Commission heard from the Chairwoman of each new subcommittee: Unlocking Opportunities, Commissioner Saunders; Financial Freedom, Commissioner Hendrian; Visible Authentic Leadership, Commissioner Williams; and Implicit Bias, Commissioners Lambert-Bounds and Derrer.
- 4) October 6, 2020, virtual meeting. The Commission heard from guest speakers James White, Director, Michigan Dept. of Civil Rights, and Susan Corbin, Senior Chief Deputy, Dept. of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO).

[www.michigan.gov/mwc](http://www.michigan.gov/mwc)

### **Strategic Planning Session: March 9, 2020:**

The MWC held a day long strategic planning session on March 9, 2020. The session was facilitated by Dr. Naimah Wade. Rebecca Bahar-Cook of Capital Fundraising Associates addressed the roles and responsibilities of the commissioners.

The MWC adopted new initiatives based on our learnings from the Gender Equity Conversations held in 2019 and 2020 with women from around the state.

The initiatives are as follows:

#### ***Unlocking Opportunities***

Michigan women face several barriers that often prevent full and continuous participation in the workforce. Most of these barriers come from the costs – in time, dollars and energy – of caregiving for others. For example, the availability and affordability of high-quality child care limits women’s choices in job types, work hours and even whether to work outside the home, especially for women of color and women in low-income brackets ([Michigan League for Public Policy](#)). Without guaranteed paid parental leave across all sectors and jobs, many Michigan women must make tough decisions about whether and when to start or expand their families ([WZZM13, Lansing State Journal](#)). Women also take on a disproportionate amount of overall family caregiving – and that caregiving is growing more complex, including taking time off work to accompany aging parents and grandparents to medical appointments ([National Partnership for Women & Families](#)). The Unlocking Opportunities Committee will pursue initiatives to eliminate these barriers to work choice.

#### ***Financial Freedom***

Women in Michigan have made considerable advances in economic status in recent years but still face inequities that often prevent them from reaching their full potential. Since the 2004 Status of Women in the States report by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research was published, the gender wage gap in Michigan has narrowed, a higher percentage of women have bachelor’s degrees, however, a larger share of women live in poverty. In Michigan, 50% of single female-headed households are living in poverty according to the [2019 Michigan ALICE Report](#). According to the [National Partnership for Women and Families](#), each year, Michigan women working full time, year-round are typically paid much less than white, non-Hispanic men. The pay gap is greatest among Latina, Black and Native American women. And many women with or without children, both single and married, work to support themselves and other family members. Thus, persistent earnings inequality for working women translates into lower pay, less family income, and more children and families in poverty. The MWC Financial Freedom Committee will focus on actions to close gaps and increase access to income. Examples include advocating for strategies to achieve pay equity, and access to education and training for higher-paying jobs.

### ***Visible Authentic Leadership***

The number of women serving in leadership positions in Michigan at all levels in business, non-profits and elected ranks are sorely lacking. This committee will explore policies that will increase the number of women serving in publicly visible leadership roles across sectors. Examples include incentives for promoting more women into corporate executive leadership, increasing the number of women serving on corporate, foundation and nonprofit boards, and encouraging more women to run for elected office at all levels of government.

### ***Committee on Implicit Bias***

Starting in October 2019, until the coronavirus pandemic ended public gatherings in March 2020, the Commission hosted several Gender Equity Conversations around the state. Joined at every event by Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Commissioners hosted these conversations to hear directly from Michigan women about the policy issues they deem top priorities to move us closer to achieving gender equity. Across all conversations and across all issue areas, conversation participants asked the Commission to directly and openly address implicit bias and systemic racism as it relates to the Commission's work, specifically, and to the state's policymaking, in general. The Committee on Implicit Bias is an internal oversight committee to provide ongoing learning opportunities for Commissioners to identify, acknowledge and minimize implicit bias in themselves and within the Michigan Women's Commission, and to develop a common language and lens to guide the Commission's work and policy recommendations. When appropriate, these learning opportunities will be shared with policymakers and the public. New MWC committees met multiple times throughout 2020 to develop committee descriptions and strategic set of SMART goals to address new Commission priorities.

### **Other Activities:**

#### **Conversations on Gender Equity**

The MWC held [Conversations on Gender Equity](#) in order to stimulate and encourage the study and review of the status of women in this state. A continuation of conversations starting in the fall of 2019, the 2020 conversations were held in West Bloomfield on January 9, in Detroit on January 13, and in Traverse City on February 28. The outcomes of the conversations will help inform Governor Whitmer's agenda and the work of the MWC.

#### **Appointments to the Commission:**

Governor Whitmer made five appointments and two re-appointments to the Commission. MWC developed a new commissioner orientation process and onboarded new commissioners. [MWC - Michigan Women's Commission to Hold Virtual Meeting, Welcome Seven New Appointees](#)

**21-Day Racial Equity Challenge Learning Cohorts:**

We also launched three 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge Learning Cohorts in partnership with the Michigan League for Public Policy. By enrolling in an MWC Challenge Cohort, participants receive a daily email from the Commission for 21 consecutive days. Each email contains a tool or resource to guide their learning, as well as a link to the League's online discussion forum for that day's topic. Participants also receive an invitation to participate in three facilitated live online reflection conversation with fellow cohort members. [MWC - Michigan Women's Commission Launches 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge; Announces New 2020-21 Priorities](#)

**MWC Interns Program:**

MWC created a new MWC intern program and launched with six students from Michigan colleges/universities.

**Child Care Use Survey:**

MWC created and distributed a [child care use survey](#) of Michigan parents to determine child care use during the pandemic and anticipated post-pandemic child care needs. We supplemented the survey with six online conversations hosted by partner organizations and Commissioners. Data was compiled with policy proposals for the Governor and appropriate departments and agencies. [MWC - Michigan Women's Commission releases results of statewide Survey on Child Care Use, continues to advocate for expanded child care option](#)

**Social Media:**

Re-engaged MWC Facebook and Twitter accounts, and soft-launched new Instagram and LinkedIn accounts.

Overhauled and updated all content on MWC website.

Launched a women's organization and women's issue interest stakeholder email sign-up and list.

**Move to LEO:**

Navigated executive order, announcement, and transition from the Michigan Department of Civil Rights to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity.

Developed a new commissioner orientation process and onboarded ten new commissioners.

[MWC - Governor Whitmer Takes Action to Strengthen Michigan's Efforts to Achieve Gender Equity, Build Greater Economic Security for Women](#)

**MWC Events and Speaking Engagements:**

Hosted "[Her Voice Her Vote: Celebrating 100 years of the Women's Vote](#)," a virtual event with 3,000+ live and subsequent views across multiple platforms. Event featured Governor Whitmer and Secretary Benson, among other speakers and videos.

Supported Equal Pay Day Coalition in organizing (and rescheduling to virtual) annual Equal Pay Day event.

Chief Strategy Officer Shannon Garrett spoke on a [United Way for Southeastern Michigan Town Hall](#), and a University of Michigan Women in Politics Fireside Chat.

MWC Commissioners hosted a virtual roundtable discussion at the [Gender, Women's Suffrage & Political Power](#) conference on November 20. Chief Strategy Officer Shannon Garrett also led a workshop on running for elected office at the virtual conference on November 18.

**MWC Op-Eds, Proclamations and News:**

[MWC - Michigan Women's Commission Commemorates National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, May 5, 2020](#)

[MWC - Gov. Whitmer Declares March 2020 as Women's History Month \(michigan.gov\)](#)

[Opinion: Michigan tribes call out violence against women, Whitney Gravelle \(detroitnews.com\)](#)

[Viewpoint: Working toward a more equitable future for women, with women  
Chris Etienne and Muna Jondy, guest writers March 20, 2020](#)

[The Michigan Women's Commission is building on women's right to vote, Cheryl Bergman \(lansingstatejournal.com\)](#)

[Female leaders have gotten used to threats, harassment. It's time to change that. Cheryl Bergman \(Detroit Free Press\)](#)

[Commentary: Unite against the pandemic — and not against each other \(crainsdetroit.com\)](#)  
(Women Business Leaders op ed)

Sincerely,

Cheryl Bergman  
CEO, Michigan Women's Commission

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